

REMARKS

Claims 1 – 18 are pending and rejected.

The applicants' attorney amends claims 1, 4, 8, 14 and 18 to address the examiner's rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), and amends claims 2, 3 and 5 not to overcome the examiner's rejection, but to more clearly recite an aspect of the applicants' invention. The applicants' attorney also amends claims 15 and 16 to correct a typographical error. The amendments to claims 15 and 16 do not narrow these claims. And the applicants' attorney cancels claims 6, 7, 10, 11 and 17, and adds claims 19 – 26. The applicants' attorney respectfully asserts that claims 1 – 5, 8, 9, 12 – 16 and 18 – 26, as amended, are in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed below.

Objection to Claims 5 and 6

The applicants' attorney has amended claim 5 and canceled claim 6. Claim 5, as amended, now further limits the subject matter of claim 4 from which it depends. Claim 5, as amended, now also claims dependency from claim 4; not claim 6. Therefore the applicants' attorney respectfully asserts that that claim, as amended, overcomes the examiner's objections.

Rejection of Claims 1 – 3 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

The applicants' attorney respectfully asserts that claim 1, as amended, is patentable over U.S. Patent 6,504,710 issued to Sutton *et. al.* (Sutton) because Sutton fails to disclose a coupler that includes a body that is inoperable to couple an electrical signal from one device to another device .

The applicants' claim 1, as amended, recites a coupler comprising a body that is inoperable to couple an electrical signal from one device to another device.

For example, as shown in FIG. 3 and discussed in paragraphs 15 and 19 – 21 of the specification, a coupler 32 includes a first portion 49 that may be inserted into a receptacle 56 of the peripheral device 36, a second portion 51 that may be inserted into a receptacle 54 of another peripheral device 34, and a body 38 that joins the portions 49 and 51. The body 38 is inoperable to couple an electrical signal from one of the devices 34 and 36 to the other device. When the coupler 32 fastens the

device 36 to the device 34, the device 34 is more securely supported by the device 36 than it would be if the device 34 were just placed on top of the device 36. But the coupler 32 does not couple electrical circuitry in the device 34 to electrical circuitry in the device 36.

In contrast, Sutton fails to disclose a coupler that includes a body that is inoperable to couple an electrical signal from one device to another device. Sutton discloses a system including a computer 10 (FIGS. 7 – 9 and 1 – 3), an auxiliary expansion unit 80 (FIGS. 7 – 9 and 4A – 4C), and a docking station 120 (FIGS. 7 – 9 and 5A – 6). The computer 10 includes a circuit board 24 (FIG. 1) that has electronic components (*Col. 5, lines 4 – 31*) and a docking connector 18 (FIG. 1) (*Col. 4, lines 12 – 20*). The auxiliary expansion unit 80 includes a circuit board 92 that has easily accessible standard input/output electronic connectors to allow one to couple other auxiliary devices, such as a printer, to the circuit board 92 (*Col. 8, lines 5 – 18*). The auxiliary expansion unit also includes connectors 82' (FIG. 4B) (*Col. 7, lines 28 – 35*) and 88' (FIG. 4A) (*Col. 7, lines 42 – 50*). The docking station 120 includes a circuit board 191 (FIG. 5A) having an input/output connector 123 (FIG. 5A) (*Col. 8, line 64 – Col. 9, line 7*). When the computer 10 and auxiliary expansion unit 80 are coupled, the computer's docking connector 18 is coupled to the auxiliary unit's connector 82' to allow electrical signals to pass to and from the circuit boards 24 and 92. (*Col. 8, lines 47 – 57*). And, when the auxiliary expansion unit 80 and docking station 120 are coupled, the docking station's connector 123 is coupled to the auxiliary unit's connector 88' to allow electrical signals to pass to and from the circuit boards 92 and 191 (*Col. 12, lines 5 – 13*). Thus, the respective connectors of the auxiliary expansion unit 80, the docking station 120 and computer 10, each allow an electrical signal from the unit 80, station 120 or computer 10 to reach one or both of the remaining unit 80, station 120 or computer 10. Therefore, unlike the applicants' claimed coupler, Sutton's system does not include a coupler having a body that is inoperable to couple an electrical signal from one device to another device.

Claims 2 and 3 are patentable by virtue of their dependencies on claim 1 as amended.

Rejection of Claims 4 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claim 4 is patentable over Sutton for reasons similar to those recited above in support of claim 1 over Sutton. Claim 4 recites a body for joining a first portion to a housing and that does not include electronic circuitry. In contrast, Sutton's computer 10, auxiliary expansion unit 80, docking station 120 and their respective connectors each include electronic circuitry.

Claim 7 is patentable by virtue of its dependency from claim 4.

Rejection of Claims 8, 9, 12 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claim 8 is patentable over Sutton for reasons similar to those recited above in support of claim 1 over Sutton.

Claims 9, 12 and 13 are patentable by virtue of their dependencies from claim 8.

Rejection of Claims 14 – 17 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claim 14 is patentable over Sutton for reasons similar to those recited above in support of claim 1 over Sutton.

Claims 15, 16 and 18 are patentable by virtue of their dependencies from claim 14.

Rejection of Claims 18 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claim 18, as amended, is patentable over Sutton for reasons similar to those recited above in support of claim 4 over Sutton.

Conclusion

The applicants' attorney respectfully requests the examiner withdraw his rejection of claims 1 – 5, 8, 9, 12 – 16 and 18 in view of applicants' amendments and remarks and issue an allowance for claims 1 – 5, 8, 9, 12 – 16 and 18 – 26.

If the examiner believes that a phone interview would be helpful, he is respectfully requested to contact the Applicants' attorney, John Janeway, at (425) 455-5575.

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Respectfully submitted,

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FOR

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